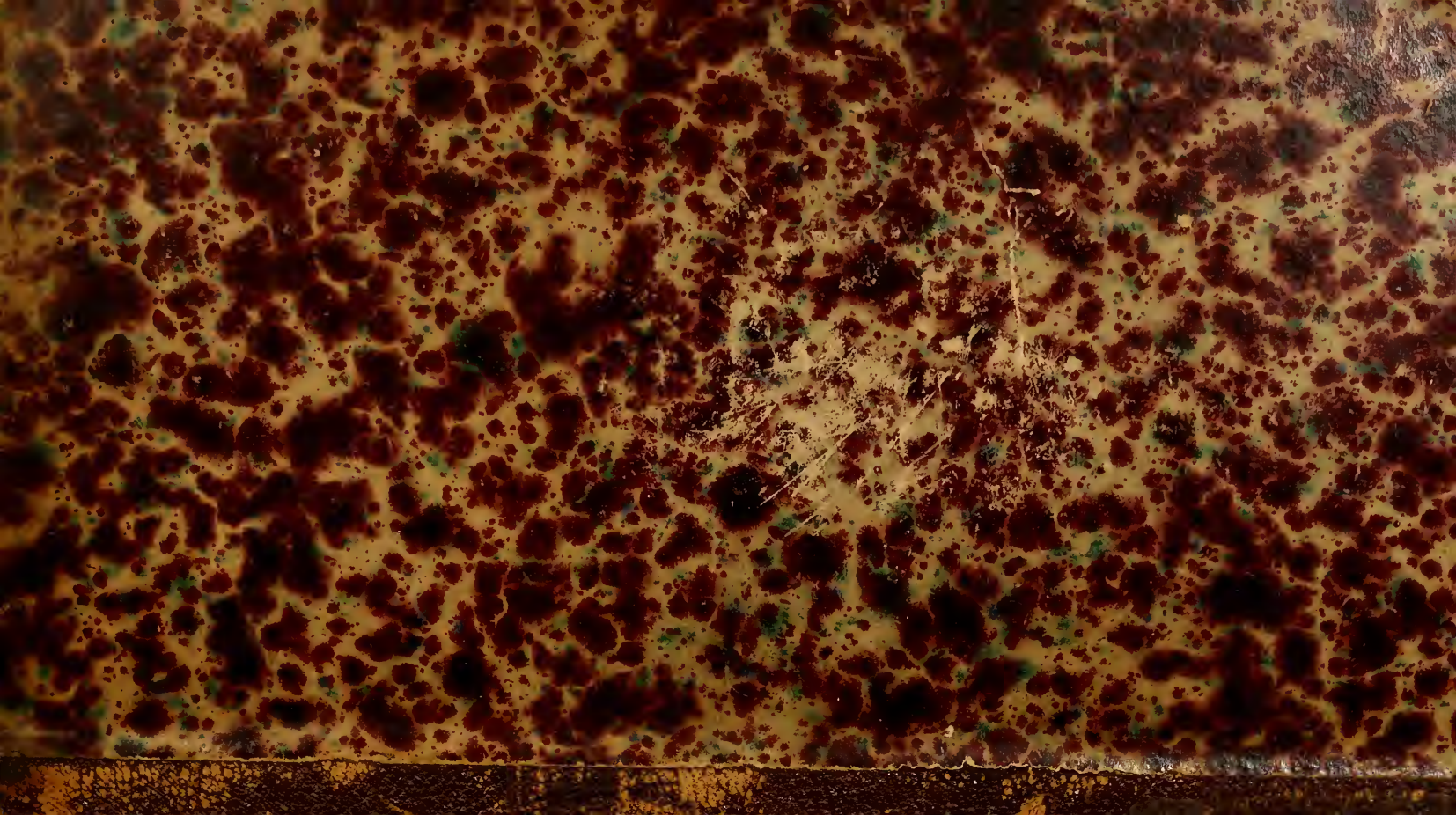

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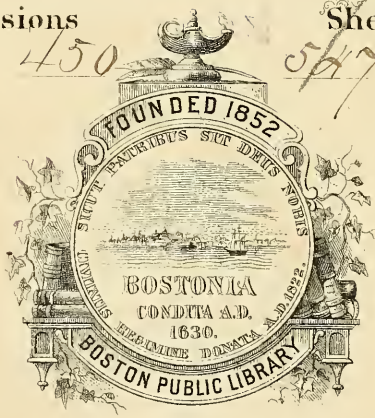

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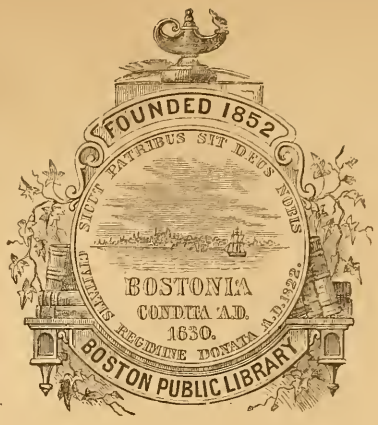

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PAMPHLETS.

Christ.

THE

MORAL CHARACTER OF CHRIST,

OR

THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY, A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

A Theological Tract for the People.

BY

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NOTICE.

The substance of this Essay was first delivered as an address before the Porter Rhetorical Society of the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass., Aug. 1, 1860, and then preached, in a modified form, as the opening sermon before the meeting of the Synod of the German Reformed Church, held at Lebanon, Pa., Oct. 16, 1860, based upon Mark 7, 37; John 20, 28; John 10, 30. It is now considerably enlarged and published by request of laymen as well as ministers, in the hope that it may confirm the faith of believers, and assist the honest enquirer in solving the great question: What do ye think of the Son of man?

Mercersburg, Pa., Nov. 24, 1860.

THE

MORAL CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he was commanded to put off his shoes from his feet: for the place whereon he stood, was holy ground. With what reverence and awe then should we approach the contemplation of the great reality—God manifest in the flesh—of which the vision of Moses was but a significant type and shadow!

The life and character of Jesus Christ is truly the holy of holies in the history of the world. Eighteen hundred years have passed away, since He appeared in the fulness of time on this earth to redeem a fallen race from sin and death, and to open a never ceasing fountain of righteousness and life. The ages before him anxiously awaited his coming, as the desire of all nations; the ages after him proclaim his glory and ever extend his dominion. The noblest and best of men under every clime hold him in the purest affection and the profoundest gratitude, not only, but in divine adoration and worship. His name is above every name that may be named in heaven or on earth, and the only one whereby the sinner can be saved. He is Immanuel, God with us, the Eternal Word become flesh, very God and very man in one undivided person, the Author of the new creation, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Prophet, Priest and King of regenerate humanity, the Saviour of the world. Thus He stands out to the faith of

the entire Christian Church, Greek, Latin, and Evangelical, in every civilized country on the globe. His power is now greater, his kingdom larger than ever, and will continue to spread, until all nations shall bow before him and kiss his sceptre of righteousness and peace.

Blessed is he who from the heart can believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the fountain of salvation. True faith is indeed no work of nature, but an act of God wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, who reveals Christ to us in his true character, as Christ revealed the Father. Faith with its justifying, sanctifying and saving power is independent of science and learning, and may be kindled even in the heart of a little child and an illiterate slave. It is the peculiar glory of the Redeemer and his religion to be coëxtensive with humanity itself without distinction of sex, age, nation and race. His saving grace flows and overflows to all and for all, on the simple condition of repentance and faith.

This fact, however, does not supersede the necessity of thought and argument. Revelation, although above nature and above reason, is not against nature and against reason. On the contrary, nature and the supernatural as has been well said by a distinguished New England divine, "constitute together the one system of God."* Christianity satisfies the deepest intellectual as well as moral and religious wants of man who is created in the image and for the glory of God. It is the revelation of truth as well as of life. Faith and knowledge, pistis and gnosis, are not antagonistic but complementary forces, not enemies but

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* By Horace Bushnell in his recent work on the subject. The same idea Dr. John W. Nevin, in his able work "*The Mystical Presence*," Philad., 1846, p. 199, expresses in these words: "Nature and Revelation, the world and Christianity, as springing from the same divine Mind, are not two different systems joined together in a merely outward way. They form a single whole, harmonious with itself in all its parts. The sense of the one then is necessarily included and comprehended in the sense of the other. The mystery of the new creation must involve in the end the mystery of the old; and the key that serves to unlock the meaning of the first, must serve to unlock the inmost secret of the last."

inseparable twin sisters. Faith precedes knowledge, but it just as necessarily leads to knowledge; while true knowledge on the other hand is always rooted and grounded in faith and tends to confirm and to strengthen it. Thus we find the two combined in the famous confession of Peter when he says in the name of all the other apostles: "We believe and we know that Thou art the Christ."* But so intimately are both connected that we may also reverse the famous maxim of Augustine, Anselm and Schleiermacher: *Fides praecedit intellectum*, and say: *Intellectus praecedit fidem.* For how can we believe in any object without at least some general historical knowledge of its existence and character? Faith even in its first form, as a submission to the authority of God and an assent to the truth of his revelation, is an exercise of the mind and reason as well as of the heart and the will. An idiot or a madman cannot believe. Our religion demands not a blind, but a rational, intelligent faith, and this just in proportion to its strength and fervor aims at an ever deepening insight into its own sacred contents and object.

As living faith in Christ is the soul and centre of all sound practical Christianity and piety, so the true doctrine of Christ is the soul and centre of all sound Christian theology. St. John makes the denial of the incarnation of the Son of God the criterion of antichrist, and consequently the belief in this central truth the test of Christianity. The incarnation and the divine glory shining through the veil of Christ's humanity is the grand theme of his Gospel, which he wrote with the pen of an angel from the very heart of Christ, as his favorite disciple and bosom-friend. The Apostles' Creed starting as it does from the confession of Peter makes the article on Christ most prominent and assigns to it the central position between the preceding article of God the Father, and the succeeding article on the Holy Ghost. The development of ancient Catholic theol-

* John 6, 69: ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν, credidimus et cognovimus. The reverse order we have in John 10, 38: "that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him."

ogy commenced and culminated with the triumphant defense of the true divinity and true humanity of Christ, against the opposite heresies of Judaizing Ebionism which denied the former, and paganizing Gnosticism which resolved the latter into a shadowy phantom. The evangelical Protestant theology is essentially christological or controlled throughout by the proper idea of Christ as the God-man and Saviour. This is emphatically the article of the standing or falling Church. In this the two most prominent ideas of the Reformation, the doctrine of the supremacy of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, meet and are vitally united. Christ's word—the only unerring and efficient guide of truth, Christ's work—the only unfailing and sufficient source of peace, Christ—all in all, this is the principle of genuine Protestantism.

In the construction of the true doctrine of Christ's person we may, with St. John in the prologue to his Gospel, begin from above with his eternal Godhead and proceed through the creation and the preparatory revelation of the Old Testament dispensation till we reach the incarnation and his truly human life for the redemption of the race. Or, with the other evangelists, we may begin from below with his birth from the Virgin Mary and rise up through the successive stages of his earthly life, his discourses and miracles to his assumption into that divine glory which he had before the foundation of the world. The result reached in both cases is the same, that Christ unites in his person the whole fulness of the Godhead and the whole fulness of sinless manhood.

The older theologians, both Catholic and Evangelical, proved the divinity of the Saviour in a direct way from the miracles performed by him, and the prophecies fulfilled in him, from the divine names which he bears, from the divine attributes which are predicated of him, from the divine works which he performed, and from the divine honors which he claimed, and which were fully accorded to him by his apostles and the whole Christian Church to this day.

But it may also be proved by the opposite process, the contemplation of the singular perfection of his humanity, which rises, by almost universal consent even of unbelievers, so far above every human greatness known before or since, that it can only be rationally explained on the ground of such an essential union with the Godhead as he claimed himself and as his inspired apostles ascribed to him. The more deeply we penetrate through the veil of his flesh, the more clearly we behold the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father shining through the same, full of grace and of truth.*

Modern evangelical theology owes this new homage to the Saviour. The powerful attacks of the latest phase of infidelity upon the credibility of the Gospel History call for it and have already led, by way of reaction, to new triumphs of the old faith of the Church in her divine head. Our humanitarian, philanthropic and yet skeptical age is more susceptible for this argument than for the old dogmatic method of demonstration. With Thomas, the representative of honest and earnest skepticism among the apostles, it refuses to believe in the divinity of the Lord unless supported by the testimony of its senses ; it desires to lay the finger into the print of his nails and to thrust the hand into his side, before it exclaim in humble adoration: " My Lord and my God."†

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* Ullmann, *Suendlosigkeit Jesu*, 6th ed. p. 215 : " So führt schon das Vollendet-Menschliche in Jesu, wenn wir es mit allem Uebrigen, was die Menschheit darbietet, vergleichen, zur Anerkennung des Göttlichen in ihm." Dorner, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Lehre von der Person Christi*, 2nd ed. vol. II. p. 1211 : " Jesu Heiligkeit und Weisheit, durch die er unter den sündigen, viel-irrenden Menschen einzig dasteht, weiset . . . auf einen übernatürlichen Ursprung seiner Person. Diese muss, um inmitten der Sünderwelt begreiflich zu sein, aus einer eigenthümlichen und wunderbar schöpferischen That Gottes abgeleitet, ja es muss in Christus . . . von Gott aus betrachtet, eine Incarnation göttlicher Liebe, also göttlichen Wesens gesehen werden, was ihn als den Punkt erscheinen lässt, wo Gott und die Menschheit einzig und innigst geeinigt sind." Compare also Ebrard, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 1852, vol. II. p. 24–31.

† A Life of Christ written from this stand-point and rising from the humanity to the divinity of the Saviour, is yet a desideratum in our theological

It is from this point of view that we will endeavor, in as popular and concise a manner as the difficulty of the subject and the dignity of the occasion permit, to analyze and exhibit the human character of Christ. We propose to take up the man Jesus of Nazareth as he appears on the simple, unsophisticated record of the plain and honest fishermen of Galilee, and as he lives in the faith of Christendom, and we shall find him in all the stages of his life both as a private individual and as a public character so far elevated above the reach of successful rivalry and so singularly perfect that this very perfection in midst of an imperfect and sinful world constitutes an irresistible proof of his divinity.

A full discussion of the subject would require us to consider Christ in his official as well as personal character, and to describe him as a teacher, a reformer, a worker of miracles, and the founder of a spiritual kingdom universal in extent and perpetual in time. From every point of view

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literature. But we have important contributions towards it, especially by three modern divines, a German, an English, and an American, which shows that this view of Christ forces itself upon the thinking minds of the three nations which now take the lead in Protestant theological science and literature. We refer to Dr. C. Ullmann: *Die Suendlosigkeit Jesu. Eine apologetische Betrachtung* (first published in the "*Studien und Kritiken*," 1828, Heft 1), 6th ed. Heidelberg, 1853 (translated into English by Lundin Brown: *The Sinlessness of Jesus: an Evidence of Christianity.* Edinburgh, 1858); John Young: *The Christ of History; an Argument grounded in the facts of his Life on earth*, republ. New York, 1856; and Horace Bushnell: *Nature and the Supernatural, as together constituting the one System of God*, New York, 1858; Chapter X and XI. p, 276-366. Compare also the beautiful Essay of the late Dr. James W. Alexander of New York, on the *Character of Jesus, an Argument for the Divine Origin of Christianity* (published in the "Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity delivered at the University of Virginia," New York, 1852, p. 193–211), and my *History of the Apostolic Church*, New York, 1853, (first in German at Mercersburg, 1851) p. 433 ff., and my *History of the Christian Church in the first three Centuries*, p. 53–59. It should be stated that the apologetic anti-Strauss literature on the Life of Jesus, especially Neander, Lange, Olshausen, Ebrard, Tholuck, Hoffmann, Schmid and Dorner, have brought out the ethical element and human perfection of Christ more fully than had been done before. The French works of E. Dandiran: *Essai sur la divinite du caractere moral de Jesus-Christ*, Genève, 1850, and of Edm. de Pressensé: *Le Redempteur*, Par., 1854, which seem to follow the same train of thought, we know only by name.

we would be irresistibly driven to the same result. But our present purpose confines us to the consideration of his personal character, and this alone, we think, is sufficient for the conclusion.

Christ passed through all the stages of human life from infancy to manhood, and represented each in its ideal form, that he might redeem and sanctify them all and be a perpetual model for imitation. He was the model infant, the model boy, the model youth, and the model man.* But the weakness, decline and decrepitude of old age would be incompatible with his character and mission. He died and rose in the full bloom of early manhood, and lives in the hearts of his people in unfading freshness and unbroken vigor for ever.

Let us first glance at the infancy and boyhood of the Saviour. The history of the race commences with the beauty of innocent youth in the garden of Eden, "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," in beholding Adam and Eve created in the image of their Maker, the crowning glory of all his wonderful works. So the second Adam, the Redeemer of the fallen race, The Restorer and Perfecter of man, comes first before us in the accounts of the Gospels as a child born, not in paradise, it is true, but among the dreary ruins of sin and death, from an humble virgin, in a lowly manger,—yet pure and innocent, the subject of the praise of angels and

* This idea is almost as old as the Christian Church and was already pretty clearly taught by Irenaeus, who, through the single link of his teacher Polycarp, stood connected with the age of St. John the apostle. He says, *Adv. haereses*, lib. II. cap. 22. §. 4: "Omnes enim venit (Christus) per semetipsum salvare, omnes, inquam, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, infantes et parvulos et pueros et seniores. Ideo per omnem venit aetatem et infantibus infans factus, sanctificans infantes; in parvulis parvulus, sanctificans hanc ipsam habentes aetatem, simul et exemplum illis pietatis effectus et justitiae et subjectionis; in juvenibus juvenis, exemplum juvenibus fiens et sanctificans Domino. Sic et senior in senioribus (?), ut sit perfectus magister in omnibus," etc. But Irenaeus erred in carrying the idea too far and assuming Chris to have lived over fifty years, on the ground of the indefinite estimate of the Jews, John 8, 57. Hippolytus, in his recently discovered *Philosophumena*, expresses the same view.

the adoration of men. Heaven and earth, the Shepherds of Bethlehem in the name of Israel longing after salvation, and the Wise Men from the East as the representatives of heathenism in its dark groping after the "unknown God," unite in the worship of the new born King and Saviour. Here we meet at the very threshold of the earthly history of Christ that singular combination of humility and grandeur, of simplicity and sublimity, of the human and divine which characterizes it throughout, and distinguishes it from every other history. He is not represented as an unnatural prodigy, anticipating the maturity of a later age, but as a truly human child, silently lying and smiling on the bosom of his Virgin mother, "growing" and "waxing strong in spirit,"† and therefore subject to the law of regular development; yet differing from all other children by his supernatural conception and perfect freedom from hereditary sin and guilt. He appears in the celestial beauty of unspotted innocence, a veritable flower of paradise. He was "that Holy Thing," according to the announcement of the angel Gabriel, ‡ admired and loved by all who approached him in childlike spirit, but exciting the dark suspicion of the tyrant king who represented his future enemies and persecutors. Who can measure the ennobling, purifying and cheering influence which proceeds from the contemplation of the Christ-child at each returning Christmas season upon the hearts of young and old in every land and nation! The loss of the first estate is richly compensated by the undying innocence of paradise regained.

Of the boyhood of Jesus we know only one fact, recorded by Luke, but it is in perfect keeping with the peculiar charm of his childhood and forshadows at the same time the glory of his public life, as one uninterrupted service of his heavenly Father.‖ When twelve years old we find him

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† Luke 2, 40. Comp. 2, 52. Heb. 2, 10–18 and 5, 8 and 9, where it is said, that he *learned* obedience, and being made perfect he *became* the author of eternal salvation. ‡ Luke 1, 35.

‖ Dr. J. P. Lange, in his *Leben Jesu nach den Evangelien*, Heidelberg, 1844, sqq. vol. II. p. 127, says: Die Geschichte des zwölfjährigen Jesu repräsentirt

in the temple in the midst of the Jewish doctors, not teaching and offending them, as in the apocryphal Gospels, by any immodesty or forwardness, but hearing and asking questions, thus actually learning from them; and yet filling them with astonishment at his understanding and answers. There is nothing premature, forced or unbecoming his age, and yet a degree of wisdom and an intensity of interest in religion which rises far above a purely human youth. "He increased," we are told, "in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man;"§ he was subject to his parents and practised all the virtues of an obedient son; and yet he filled them with a sacred awe as they saw him absorbed in "the things of his Father," ¶ and heard him utter words, which they were unable to understand at the time, but which Mary treasured up in her heart as a holy secret, convinced that they must have some deep meaning answering to the mystery of his supernatural conception and birth.

Such an idea of a harmless and faultless heavenly childhood, of a growing, learning, and yet surprisingly wise boyhood, as it meets us in living reality at the portal of the Gospel history, never entered the imagination of biographer, poet, or philosopher before. On the contrary, as has been justly observed by an able American divine,* "in all

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seine ganze Entwicklung. Sie ist seine charakterische Knabenthat, die Offenbarung seines jugendlichen Lebens; ein Wiederglanz der Herrlichkeit seiner Geburt, ein Vorzeichen seines zukünftigen Heldenlaufes Sie stellt die Kindheit seiner Idealität dar; desswegen auch die Idealität der Kindheit überhaupt." Compare also the suggestive remarks of Olshausen to that passage *Commentar*, (3rd Germ. ed.) vol. I. p. 145 ff. §Luke 2, 52.

¶ Luke 2, 49: ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου δεῖ, (the δεῖ indicates a *moral* necessity which is identical with true freedom) εἶναι με. The fathers and most of the modern commentators refer the τοῖς to the *house* of God, or the temple. This is grammatically allowable, but restricts the sense and deprives it of its deeper meaning. For he could only occasionally be in the temple of Jerusalem. Nearly all the English versions, Tyndal, Cranmer, Geneva, and James, translate more correctly "about my father's business." But we object to the *business* in this connection, and prefer the more literal translation "*in* (not *about*) *the things* (or affairs) of my Father." The *in* signifies the life element in which Christ moved during his whole life, whether in the temple or out of it.

* Horace Bushnell, in his genial work already quoted, on *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 280.

the higher ranges of character, the excellence portrayed is never the simple unfolding of a harmonious and perfect beauty contained in the germ of childhood, but it is a character formed by a process of rectification in which many follies are mended and distempers removed, in which confidence is checked by defeat, passion moderated by reason, smartness sobered by experience. Commonly a certain pleasure is taken in showing how the many wayward sallies of the boy are, at length, reduced by discipline to the character of wisdom, justice, and public heroism so much admired. Besides, if any writer, of almost any age, will undertake to describe, not merely a spotless, but a superhuman or celestial childhood, not having the reality before him, he must be somewhat more than human himself, if he does not pile together a mass of clumsy exaggerations, and draw and overdraw, till neither heaven nor earth can find any verisimilitude in the picture."

This unnatural exaggeration, into which the mythical fancy of man, in its endeavor to produce a superhuman childhood and boyhood, will inevitably fall, is strikingly exhibited in the apocryphal Gospels, which are related to the canonical Gospels as the counterfeit to the genuine coin, or as a revolting caricature to the inimitable original, but which by the very contrast tend, negatively, to corroborate the truth of the evangelical history. While the evangelists expressly reserve the performance of miracles to the age of maturity and public life, and observe a significant silence concerning the parents of Jesus, the pseudo-evangelists fill the infancy and early years of the Saviour and his mother with the strangest prodigies, and make the active intercession of Mary very prominent throughout. According to their representation, even dumb idols, irrational beasts, and senseless trees, bow in adoration before the infant Jesus on his journey to Egypt, and after his return, when yet a boy of five or seven years, he changes balls of clay into flying birds for the idle amusement of his playmates, strikes terror round about him, dries up a stream of water by a mere word, transforms his

companions into goats, raises the dead to life, and performs all sorts of miraculous cures through a magical influence which proceeds from the very water in which he was washed, the towels which he used, and the bed on which he slept.* Here we have the falsehood and absurdity of unnatural fiction, while the New Testament presents us the truth and beauty of a supernatural, yet most real history which shines out only in brighter colors by the contrast of the mythical shadow.

With the exception of these few but significant hints, the youth of Jesus and the preparation for his public ministry are enshrined in mysterious silence. But we know the outward condition and circumstances, under which he grew up; and these must be admitted to furnish no explanation for the astounding results without the admission of the supernatural and divine element in his life.

He grew up among a people seldom and only contemptuously named by the ancient classics, and subjected at the time to the yoke of a foreign oppressor; in a remote and conquered province of the Roman empire; in the darkest district of Palestine; in a little country town of proverbial insignificance; in poverty and manual labor, in the obscurity of a carpenter's shop; far away from universities, academies, libraries, and literary or polished society; without any help, as far as we know, except the parental care, the book of nature, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the secret intercourse of his soul with God the heavenly Father. Hence the question of Nathanael: "What good can come out of Nazareth?" Hence the natural surprise of the Jews, who knew all his human relations and antecedents. "How knoweth this man letters," they asked, when they heard Jesus teach, "having never learned?" † And on another occasion, when he taught in the synagogue: "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother

* See the particulars with ample quotations from the sources in Rud. Hofmann's *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen im Zusammenhang aus den Quellen erzaehlt und wissenschaftlich untersucht.* Leipzig, 1851. p. 140—262.

† John 7, 15.

called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?"* These questions are unavoidable and unanswerable if Christ be regarded a mere man. For each effect presupposes a corresponding cause.

The difficulty here presented can by no means be solved by a reference to the fact that many, perhaps the majority of great men, especially in the Church, have risen by their own industry and perseverance from the lower walks of life and from a severe contest with poverty and obstacles of every kind. The fact itself is readily conceded; but in every one of these cases schools, or books, or patrons and friends, or peculiar events and influences, can be pointed out, as auxiliary aids in the development of intellectual or moral greatness. There is always some human or natural cause, or combination of causes, which accounts for the final result.

Luther, for instance, was, indeed, the son of poor peasants and had a very hard youth, but yet he went to the schools of Mansfeld, Magdeburg and Eisenach, to the University of Erfurt, passed through the ascetic discipline of convent life, lived in a university surrounded by professors, students and libraries, and was innocently as it were made a reformer by extraordinary events and the irresistible current of his age.

Shakspeare is generally and justly regarded as the most remarkable and almost wonderful example of a self-taught man, who without the regular routine of school education became the greatest dramatic poet of all times. But the absurd idea that the son of the Warwickshire yeoman, or butcher, or glover—we hardly know which—was essentially an unlearned man, and jumped with one bound from the supposed but poorly authenticated youthful folly of deer-stealing to the highest position in literature, has long since

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* Matth. 13, 54—56. Comp. also Mark 6, 3. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary," etc., from which it would appear that Jesus himself engaged in the trade of Joseph.

been abandoned. It is certain that he spent several years in the free grammar school of Stratford-upon-Avon, where he probably acquired the "small Latin and less Greek" which, however small in the eyes of so profound a scholar as Ben Johnson, was certainly large enough to make the fortune of any enterprising young Yankee. And whatever were the defects of his training, he must have made them up by intense private study of books and the closest observation of man and things. For his dramas—the occasional chronological, historical and geographical mistakes notwithstanding, which are small matters at all events, and in most cases, as in "Pericles" and in "Midsummer Night's Dream," intentional or mere freaks of fancy—abound in the most accurate and comprehensive knowledge of human nature under all its types and conditions, in the cold north and the sunny south, in the fifteenth century and at the time of Cæsar, under the influence of Christianity and of Judaism, together with a great variety of historical and other information which cannot be acquired without immense industry and the help of oral or written instruction.* Moreover he lived in the city of London, united the offices of actor, manager and writer, in the classic age of Elizabeth, during the closing scenes of the greatest upheaving of the human mind which ever took place since the introduction of Christianity, in the company of genial and gifted friends, and with free access to the highest ranks of blood, wealth and wit.

In the case of Christ no such natural explanation can be given. All the attempts to bring him into contact with Egyptian wisdom, or the Essenic theosophy, or other sources of learning, are without a shadow of proof, and explain nothing after all. For, unlike all other great men, even the prophets and the apostles, he was absolutely original and independent. He taught the world as one who had

* Comp. G. G. Gervinus: *Shakspeare*, Leipzig, 1850, vol. i. p. 38—41. This masterly critic and expounder of the British poet pronounces him one of the best and most extensively informed men of his age: "Es ist heute kein Wagniss mehr, zu sagen, dass Shakspeare in jener Zeit an Umfang vielfachen Wissens sehr wenige seines Gleichen gehabt habe."

learned nothing from it and was under no obligation to it. "His character and life were originated and sustained in spite of circumstances with which no earthly force could have contended, and therefore must have had their real foundation in a force which was preternatural and divine."* At the same time it is easy to see, from the admission of Christ's divinity, that by this condescension he has raised humble origin, poverty, manual labor, and the lower orders of society, to a dignity and sacredness never known before, and has revolutionized the false standard of judging the value of men and things from their outward appearance, and of associating moral worth with social elevation, and moral degradation with low rank.

We now approach the public life of Jesus. In his thirtieth year, after the Messianic inauguration through the baptism by John as his immediate forerunner and personal representative of the Old Testament, both in its legal, and prophetic or evangelical aspect, and after the Messianic probation by the temptation in the wilderness—the counterpart of the temptation of the first Adam in paradise—he entered upon his great work.

His public life lasted only three years, and before he had reached the age of ordinary maturity, he died, in the full beauty and vigor of early manhood, without tasting the infirmities of declining years, which would inevitably mar the picture of the Regenerator of the race and the Prince of life. And yet, unlike all other men of his years, he combined with the freshness, energy and originating power of youth that wisdom, moderation and experience, which belong only to mature age. The short triennium of his public ministry contains more, even from a purely historical point of observation, than the longest life of the greatest and best of men. It is pregnant with the deepest meaning of the counsel of God and the destiny of the race. It is the ripe fruit of all preceding ages, the fulfilment of the hopes and desires of the Jewish and heathen mind, and the fruit-

* John Young, *The Christ of History*, p. 35.

ful germ of succeeding generations, containing the impulse to the purest thoughts and noblest actions down to the end of time. It is, "the end of a boundless past, the centre of a boundless present, and the beginning of a boundless future."*

How remarkable, how wonderful this contrast between the short duration, and the immeasurable significance of Christ's ministry! The Saviour of the world a youth!

Other men require a long succession of years to mature their minds and character and to make a lasting impression upon the world. There are exceptions, we admit. Alexander the Great, the last and most brilliant efflorescence of the ancient Greek nationality, died a young man of thirty three after having conquered the East to the borders of the Indus. But who would think of comparing an ambitious warrior, conquered by his own lust and dying a victim of his passion, with the spotless friend of sinners; a few bloody victories of the one with the peaceful triumphs of the other; and a huge military empire of force which crumbled to pieces as soon as it was erected, with the spiritual kingdom of truth and love which stands to this day and will last for ever? Nor should it be forgotten that the true significance and only value of Alexander's conquest lay beyond the horizon of his ambition and intention, and that by carrying the language and civilization of Greece to Asia and bringing together the Oriental and Occidental world, it prepared the way for the introduction of the universal religion of Christ.

There is another striking distinction of a general character between Christ and the heroes of history, which we must notice here. We should naturally suppose that such an uncommon personage, setting up the most astounding claims and proposing the most extraordinary work, would surround himself with extraordinary circumstances and maintain a position far above the vulgar and degraded multi-

* Heinrich Steffens, a follower of Schelling, says this of man, and bases upon this thought his System of Anthropology. But it may be applied in its fullest and absolute sense to Christ, as the ideal man, in whom and through whom alone the race can become complete.

tude around him. We should expect something uncommon and striking in his look, his dress, his manner, his mode of speech, his outward life, and the train of his attendants. But the very reverse is the case. His greatness is singularly unostentatious, modest and quiet, and far from repelling the beholder, it attracts and invites him to familiar approach. His public life never moved on the imposing arena of secular heroism, but within the humble circle of every day life, and the simple relations of a son, a brother, a citizen, a teacher and a friend. He had no army to command, no kingdom to rule, no prominent station to fill, no worldly favors and rewards to dispense. He was an humble individual, without friends and patrons in the Sanhedrim or at the court of Herod. He never mingled in familiar intercourse with the religious or social leaders of the nation, whom he had startled in his twelfth year by his questions and answers. He selected his disciples from among the illiterate fishermen of Galilee and promised them no reward in this world but a part in the bitter cup of his sufferings. He dined with publicans and sinners and mingled with the common people, without ever condescending to their low manners and habits. He was so poor that he had no place on which to rest his head. He depended for the supply ot his modest wants on voluntary contributions of a few pious females, and the purse was in the hands of a thief and a traitor. Nor had he learning, art, or eloquence, in the usual sense of the term, nor any other kind of power, by which great men arrest the attention and secure the admiration of the world. The writers of Greece and Rome were ignorant even of his existence until, several years after the crucifixion, the effects of his mission in the steady growth of the sect of his followers forced from them some contemptuous notice and then roused them to opposition.

And yet this Jesus of Nazareth without money and arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Cæsar, Mahomet, and Napoleon; without science and learning he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers

and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools he spoke words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line he has set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art and sweet songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. Born in a manger, and crucified as a malefactor, he now controls the destinies of the civilized world, and rules a spiritual empire which embraces one third of the inhabitants of the globe. There never was in this world a life so unpretending, modest and lowly in its outward form and condition, and yet producing such extraordinary effects upon all ages, nations and classes of men. The annals of history produce no other example of such complete and astounding success in spite of the absence of those material, social, literary and artistic powers and influences which are indispensable to success for a mere man. Christ stands also in this respect solitary and alone among all the heroes of history, and presents to us an insolvable problem, unless we admit him to be the eternal Son of God.

We will now attempt to describe his personal or moral and religious character, as it appears in the record of his public life, and then examine his own testimony of himself, as giving us the only rational solution of this mighty problem.

The first impression which we receive from the life of Jesus is that of its perfect innocency and sinlessness inmidst of a sinful world. He and He alone carried the spotless purity of childhood untarnished through his youth and manhood. Hence the lamb and the dove are his appropriate symbols.

He was, indeed, tempted as we are, but he never yielded to temptation.* His sinlessness was at first only the *rela-*

* Comp. with the history of the temptation in the wilderness, Matth. 4 and Luke 4, the significant passages in the epistle to the Hebrews, 4, 15: πεπειραμένον κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα, χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας' and 5, 8: καίπερ ὢν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν.

tive sinlessness of Adam before the fall, which implies the necessity of trial and temptation and the peccability, or the possibility of the fall. Had he been endowed with absolute impeccability from the start, he could not be a true man, nor our model for imitation, his holiness instead of being his own self-acquired act and merit would be a mechanical gift, and his temptation an unreal show. But here is the great fundamental difference between the first and the second Adam: the first Adam lost his innocence by the abuse of his freedom and fell by his own act of disobedience into the dire necessity of sin, while the second Adam was innocent in the midst of sinners and maintained his innocence against all and every temptation. Christ's relative sinlessness or the *posse non peccare* became more and more *absolute* sinlessness or a *non posse peccare*, by his own moral act or the right use of his freedom in the absolute active and passive obedience to God.

In vain we look through the entire biography of Christ for a single stain or the slightest shadow on his moral character. There never lived a more harmless being on earth. He injured nobody, he took advantage of nobody. He never spoke an improper word, he never committed a wrong action. He never repented, never asked God for pardon and forgiveness.† He stood in no need of regeneration and conversion, nor even of reform, but simply of the regular harmonious unfolding of his moral powers. He exhibited a uniform elevation above the objects, opinions, pleasures and passions of this world, and disregard to riches, displays, fame and favor of men. The apparent outbreak of passion in the expulsion of the profane traffickers from the temple is the only instance on the record of his history which might be quoted against his freedom from the faults of humanity. But the very effect which it produced, shows that far from being the

† The petition for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, Matth. 6, 12, is no exception, as it was no expression of individual need on his part, but was intended as a model for his disciples.

outburst of passion, the expulsion was a judicial act of a religious reformer, vindicating in just and holy zeal the honor of the Lord of the temple, and that with a dignity and majesty which at once silenced the offenders, though superior in number and physical strength, and made them submit to their well deserved punishment without a murmur and in awe of the presence of a superhuman power. The cursing of the unfruitful fig tree can still less be urged, as it evidently was a significant symbolical act foreshadowing the fearful doom of the impenitent Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The perfect innocence of Jesus, however, is based not only negatively on the absence of any recorded word or act to the contrary and his absolute exemption from every trace of selfishness and worldliness, but, positively also on the unanimous testimony of John the Baptist and the apostles who bowed before the majesty of his character in unbounded veneration and declare him "just," "holy," and "without sin."* It is admitted, moreover, by his enemies: the heathen judge Pilate, and his wife, representing as it were the Roman law and justice when they shuddered with apprehension and washed the hands to be clear of innocent blood; by the rude Roman centurion confessing under the cross in the name of the disinterested spectators, "Truly this was the Son of God," and by Judas himself, the immediate witness of his whole public and private life, exclaiming in despair: "I have betrayed innocent blood."† Even dumb nature responded in mysterious sympathy, and

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* Acts 3, 14. 1 Peter 1, 19; 2, 22; 3, 18. 2 Cor. 5, 21; 1 John 2, 29; 3, 5. 7. Heb. 4, 15; 7, 26. Considering the infinite superiority of the ethics of the apostles to the ethics of the ancient Greeks it is absurd to weaken the force of this unanimous testimony (as is done by D. F. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*, Vol. II. p. 192, and to some extent even by Hase, Leben Jesu, p. 61), by a reference to Xenophon's estimate of Socrates: Οὐδεὶς πώποτε Σωκράτους οὐδὲν ἀσεβὲς οὐδὲ ἀνόσιον οὔτε πράττοντος εἶδεν, οὔτε λέγοντος ἤκουσεν. Memorab. I. 11. Comp. the just remarks of Ullmann, *Suendlosigkeit Jesu*, p. 83 ff.

† Matth. 27, 19; 24–54. Luke 23, 22–47. Matth. 27, 4.

the beclouded heavens above and the shaking earth beneath united in paying their unconscious tribute to the divine purity of their dying Lord. It is finally placed beyond all possibility of doubt by his own freedom from any sense of guilt or unworthiness, and by his open and fearless challenge to his bitter enemies: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"‡ In this question he clearly exempts himself from the common fault and guilt of the race. In the mouth of any other man this question would at once betray either the hight of hypocrisy, or a degree of self-deception bordering on madness itself, and would overthrow the very foundation of all human goodness; while from the mouth of Jesus we instinctively receive it as the triumphant self-vindication of one, who stood far above the possibility of successful impeachment or founded suspicion.‖

Admit once this fact of the perfect sinlessness of Christ, as is done even by divines who are by no means regarded orthodox,§ and you admit that Christ differed from all other

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‡ John 8, 46. Comp. the Commentators, and the reflections of Ullmann, l. c. p. 92 ff.

‖ Compare the striking remarks of H. Bushnell, p. 325: "If Jesus was a sinner, he was conscious of sin as all sinners are, and therefore was a hypocrite in the whole fabric of his character; realizing so much of divine beauty in it, maintaining the show of such unfaltering harmony and celestial grace, and doing all this with a mind confused and fouled by the affectations acted for true virtues! Such an example of successful hypocrisy would be itself the greatest miracle ever heard of in the world."

§ As Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, 3d ed. (1836) vol. ii. p. 78: "Christus war von allen andern Menschen unterschieden durch seine wesentliche Unsündlichkeit und seine schlechthinige Vollkommenheit." Karl Hase, *Leben Jesu*, 4th ed. 1854, p. 60 f. (Clarke's Eng. translation, Boston, 1860, p. 54) likewise admits it. D. F. Strauss denies it in his two destructive works, the *Life of Jesus*, and the *Dogmatics in conflict with Modern Science*, but he does so from the a priori philosophical argument of the impossibility of sinlessness, or the pantheistic notion of the inseparableness of sin from all finite existence. The only exegetical proof he urges (Dogmat. ii. 192), is Christ's word, Matth. 19, 17: "There is none good but one, that is God." But Christ answers here to the preceding question and the implied misconception of goodness. He does not decline the epithet *good* as such, but only in the superficial sense of the rich youth who regarded him simply as a distinguished rabbi and a good *man*, not as one with God. In no case can he be supposed to have contradicted his own testimony concerning his innocence. See the commentators *ad locum*, especially Olshausen, Meyer and Lange.

men not in degree only, but in kind. For although we must repudiate the pantheistic notion of the necessity of sin, and must maintain that human nature in itself considered is capable of sinlessness, that it was sinless in fact before the fall, and that it will ultimately become sinless again by the redemption of Christ: yet it is equally certain that human nature in its *present* condition is not and never was sinless since the fall, except in the single case of Christ, and that for this very reason Christ's sinlessness can only be explained on the ground of such an extraordinary indwelling of God in him as never took place in any other human being before or after. The entire Christian world, Greek, Latin, and Protestant, agree in the scriptural doctrine of the universal depravity of human nature since the apostacy of the first Adam. Even the modern and unscriptural Romish dogma of the freedom of the Virgin Mary from hereditary as well as actual sin, can hardly be quoted as an exception: for her sinlessness is explained in the papal decision by the assumption of a miraculous interposition of divine favor and the reflex influence of the merit of her Son. There is not a single mortal who must not charge himself with some defect or folly, and man's consciousness of sin and unworthiness deepens just in proportion to his self-knowledge and progress in virtue and goodness. There is not a single saint who has not experienced a new birth from above and an actual conversion from sin to holiness, and who does not feel daily the need of repentance and divine forgiveness. The very greatest and best of them, as St. Paul and St. Augustin, have passed through a violent struggle and a radical revolution, and their whole theological system and religious experience rested on the felt antithesis of sin and grace.

But in Christ we have the one solitary and absolute exception to this universal rule, an individual thinking like a man, feeling like a man, speaking, acting, suffering and dying like a man, surrounded by sinners in every direction, with the keenest sense of sin and the deepest sympathy with sinners, commencing his public ministry with the

call: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," *— yet never touched in the least by the contamination of the world, never putting himself in the attitude of a sinner before God, never shedding a tear of repentance, never regretting a single thought, word or deed, never needing or asking divine pardon, and boldly facing all his present and future enemies in the absolute certainty of his spotless purity before God and man!

A sinless Saviour inmidst of a sinful world is an astounding fact indeed, and a miracle in history. But this freedom from the common sin and guilt of the race is after all only the negative side of his character, which rises in magnitude as we contemplate the positive side, namely, absolute moral and religious perfection. It is universally admitted, even by Deists and Rationalists, that Christ taught the purest and sublimest system of ethics, which throws all the moral precepts and maxims of the wisest men of antiquity far into the shade. The Sermon on the Mount alone is worth infinitely more than all that Confucius, Socrates, and Seneca ever said or wrote on duty and virtue. But the difference is still greater if we come to the more difficult task of practice. While the wisest and best of men never live up even to their own imperfect standard of excellency, Christ fully carried out his perfect doctrine in his life and conduct. He is the living incarnation of the ideal standard of virtue and holiness, and universally acknowledged to be the highest model for all that is pure and good and noble in the sight of God and man.

We find Christ moving in all the ordinary and essential relations of life,† as a son, a friend, a citizen, a teacher, at home and in public; we find him among all classes of society, with sinners and saints, with the poor and the wealthy, with the sick and the healthy, with little children, grown men and women, with plain fishermen and learned scribes,

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* Matth. 4, 17.

† The relation of husband and father must be excepted on account of his elevation above all equal partnership and the universalness of his character and mission, which requires the entire community of the redeemed as his bride instead of any individual daughter of Eve.

with despised publicans and honored members of the Sanhedrim, with friends and foes, with admiring disciples and bitter persecutors, now with an individual as Nicodemus, or the woman of Samaria, now in the familiar circle of the twelve, now in the crowds of the people; we find him in all situations, in the synagogue and the temple, at home and on journeys, in villages and the city of Jerusalem, in the desert and on the mountain, along the banks of Jordan and the shores of the Galilean sea, at the wedding feast and the grave, in Gethsemane, in the judgment hall and on Calvary. In all these various relations, conditions and situations, as they are crowded within the few years of his public ministry, he sustains the same consistent character throughout, without ever exposing himself to censure. He fulfils every duty to God, to man, and to himself, without a single violation of duty, and exhibits an entire conformity to the law, in the spirit as well as the letter. His life is one unbroken service of God in active and passive obedience to his holy will, one grand act of absolute love to God and love to man, of personal self-consecration to the glory of the heavenly Father and the salvation of a fallen race. In the language of the people who were "beyond measure astonished at his works," we must say, the more we study his life: "He did all things well."* In a solemn appeal to his heavenly Father in the parting hour, he could proclaim to the world that he had glorified him in the earth and finished the work he gave him to do.†

The first feature in this singular perfection of Christ's character which strikes our attention, is the perfect harmony of virtue and piety, of morality and religion, or of love to God and love to man. Every moral action in him proceeded from supreme love to God, and looked to the temporal and eternal welfare of man. The groundwork of his character was the most intimate and uninterrupted

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* Mark 7, 37: Καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκε, bene omnia fecit—is to be taken as a general judgment, inferred not only from the concrete case related before, but from all they had heard and seen of Christ.

† John 17; 3. 22.

union and communion with his heavenly Father, from whom he derived, to whom he referred every thing. Already in his twelfth year he found his life element and delight in the things of his Father.* It was his daily food to do the will of Him that sent him and to finish his work.† To him he looked in prayer before every important act, and taught his disciples that model prayer which, for simplicity, brevity, comprehensiveness and suitableness, can never be surpassed. He often retired to a mountain or solitary place for prayer, and spent days and nights in this blessed privilege. But so constant and uniform was his habit of communion with the great Jehovah, that he kept it up amid the multitude, and converted the crowded city into a religious retreat. His self-consciousness was at every moment conditioned, animated and impregnated by the consciousness of God. Even when he exclaimed in indescribable anguish of body and soul, and in vicarious sympathy with the misery of the whole race: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" ‡ the bond of union was not broken or even loosened, but simply obscured for a moment, as the sun by a passing cloud, and the enjoyment, not the possession of it, was withdrawn from his feelings; for immediately afterwards he commended his soul into the hands of his Father and triumphantly exclaimed: "It is finished!" So strong and complete was this moral union of Christ with God at every moment of his life, that he fully realized for the first time the idea of religion whose object is to bring about such a union, and that he is the personal representative and living embodiment of Christianity as the true and absolute religion. But the piety of Christ was no inactive contemplation, or retiring mysticism, and selfish enjoyment, but thoroughly practical, ever active in works of charity, and tending to regenerate and transform the world into the kingdom of

* Luke 2, 49. † John 4, 34, comp. 5, 30.

‡ Matth. 27, 46. It should be remembered, that Jesus speaks here in the prophetical and typical words of David, Ps. 22, 2; while, when speaking in his own language, he uniformly addresses God as his *Father*.

God. "He went about doing good." His life is an unbroken series of good words and virtues in active exercise, all proceeding from the same union with God, animated by the same love, and tending to the same end, the glory of God and the happiness of man.

The next feature, we would notice, is the completeness or pleromatic fulness of the moral and religious character of Christ. While all other men represent at best but broken fragments of the idea of goodness and holiness, he exhausts the list of virtues and graces, which may be named.

History exhibits to us many examples of commanding and comprehensive geniuses, who stand at the head of their age and nation and furnish material for the intellectual activity of whole generations and periods, until they are succeeded by other heroes at a new epoch of development. As rivers generally spring from high mountains, so knowledge and moral power rises and is continually nourished from the heights of humanity. Abraham, the father of the faithful; Moses, the lawgiver of the Jewish theocracy; Elijah among the prophets; Peter, Paul and John among the apostles; Athanasius and Chrysostom among the Greek, Augustin and Jerome among the Latin fathers; Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus among the schoolmen; Leo and Gregory among the popes; Luther and Calvin in the line of protestant reformers and divines; Socrates, the patriarch of the ancient schools of philosophy; Homer, Dante, Shakspeare and Milton, Goethe and Schiller in the history of poetry among the various nations to which they belong; Raphael among painters; Charlemagne, the first and greatest in the long succesion of German emperors; Napoleon, towering high above all the generals of his training: Washington, the wisest and best as well as the first of American Presidents and the purest and noblest type of the American character, may be mentioned as examples of such representative heroes in history who anticipate and concentrate the powers of whole generations. But they never represent universal, but only sectional humanity; they are identified with a particular people or age and partake of its errors,

superstitions and failings almost in the same proportion in which they exhibit their virtues. Moses, though revered by the followers of three religions, was a Jew in views, feelings, habits and position as well as by parentage; Socrates never rose above the Greek type of character; Luther was a German to the back-bone and can only be properly understood as a German; Calvin, though an exile from his native land, remained a Frenchman; and Washington can be to no nation on earth what he is to the American. Their influence may and does extend far beyond their respective national horizon, yet they can never furnish a universal model for imitation. We regard them as extraordinary but fallible and imperfect men, whom it would be very unsafe to follow in every view and line of conduct. Very frequently the failings and vices of great men are in proportion to their virtues and powers, as the tallest bodies cast the longest shadow. Even the three leading apostles are models of piety and virtue only as far as they reflect the image of their heavenly Master, and it is only with this qualification that Paul exhorts his spiritual children: "Be ye followers of me even as I am also of Christ-"*

What these representative men are to particular ages or nations, or sects, or particular schools of science and art, Christ was to the human family at large in its relation to God. He and he alone is the universal type for universal imitation. Hence he could, without the least impropriety or suspicion of vanity, call upon all men to forsake all things and to follow him.† He stands above the limitations of age, school, sect, nation, and race. Although a Jew according to the flesh, there is nothing Jewish about him which is not at the same time of general significance. The particular and national in him is always duly subordinated to the general and human. Still less was he ever identified with a party or sect. He was equally removed from the stiff formalism of the Pharisees, the loose liberal-

* 1 Cor. 11, 1. Comp. 1 Thess. 1, 6: "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord."

† Matth 4, 19. 8, 22. 9, 9 Mark 2, 14. 8, 34. 10, 21. Luke 5, 27. 9, 23. 59. 18. 22. John 1, 43. 10, 27. 12, 26.

ism of the Sadducees, and the inactive mysticism of the Essenes. He rose above all the prejudices, bigotries and superstitions of his age and people, which exert their power even upon the strongest and otherwise most liberal minds. Witness his freedom in the observance of the sabbath, by which he offended the scrupulous literalists, while he fulfilled, as the Lord of the sabbath, the true spirit of the law in its universal and abiding significance ;‡ his reply to the disciples, when they traced the misfortune of the blind man to a particular sin of the subject or his parents ;‖ his liberal conduct towards the Samaritans as contrasted with the inveterate hatred and prejudice of the Jews including his own disciples at the time;¶ and his charitable judgment of the slaughtered Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them.** "Think ye," he addressed the children of superstition, "that these men were sinners above all the Galileans, and, above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." All the words and all the actions of Christ, while they were fully adapted to the occasions which called them forth, retain their force and applicability undiminished to all ages and nations. He is the same unsurpassed and unsurpassable model of every virtue to the Christians of every generation, every clime, every sect, every nation, and every race.

It must not be supposed, however, that a complete catalogue of virtues would do justice to the character under consideration. It is not only the completeness, but still more the even proportion and perfect harmony of virtues and graces apparently opposite and contradictory, which

‡ Matth. 12, 1–8. Mark 2, 23.–28. Luke 5, 1–9. John 5, 16–18.

‖ John 9, 3 : "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, (but he was born blind) that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

¶See the dialogue with the woman of Samaria, John 4, 5 ff., and the parable of the merciful Samaritan, Luke 10, 30–37.

** Luke 13, 1–4.

distinguishes him specifically from all other men. This feature has struck with singular force all the more eminent writers on the subject."* It gives the finish to that beauty of holiness which is the sublimest picture presented to our contemplation.

He was free from all one-sidedness which constitutes the weakness as well as the strength of the most eminent men. He was not a man of one idea nor of one virtue towering above all the rest. The moral forces were so well tempered and moderated by each other that none was unduly prominent, none carried to excess, none alloyed by the kindred failing. Each was checked and completed by the opposite grace. His character never lost its even balance and happy equilibrium, never needed modification or readjustment. It was thoroughly sound and uniformly consistent from the beginning to the end. We cannot properly attribute to him any one temperament. He was neither sanguine, like Peter, nor choleric, like Paul, nor melancholic like John, nor phlegmatic as James is sometimes, though incorrectly, represented to have been, but he combined the vivacity without the levity of the sanguine, the vigor without the violence of the choleric, the seriousness without the austerity of the melancholic, the calmness without the apathy of the phlegmatic temperaments. He was equally far removed from the excesses of the legalist, the pietist, the ascetic, and the enthusiast. With the strictest obedience to the law he moved in the element of

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* Comp. Ullmann, *Suendlosigkeit* p. 67, J. P. Lange, *Leben Jesu* I. 27–34, Ebrard, *Dogmatik* II. 23 and 24. Also Hase, in his *Leben Jesu* p. 63 (4th ed.) places the ideal beauty of Christ's character in "das schöne Ebenmaass aller Kräfte," and in "vollendete Gottesliebe dargestellt in reinster Humanität" ("the beautiful symmetry of all powers, and perfect love exhibited in purest humanity"). Bishop D. Wilson, in his *Evidences of Christianity*, vol. II. 116 (Boston ed. of 1830) remarks: "The opposite, and to us apparently contradictory graces were found in him in equal proportion." Dr. W. E. Channing, the Unitarian, in his sermon on the *Character of Christ* (Works, vol. IV. p. 23) says: "This combination of the spirit of humanity, in its lowliest, tenderest form, with the consciousness of unrivaled and divine glories, is the most wonderful distinction of this wonderful character."

freedom; with all the fervor of the enthusiast he was always calm, sober and self-possessed; notwithstanding his complete and uniform elevation above the affairs of this world, he freely mingled with society, male and female, dined with publicans and sinners, sat at the wedding feast, shed tears at the sepulchre, delighted in God's nature, admired the beauties of the lilies, and used the occupations of the husbandman for the illustration of the sublimest truths of the kingdom of heaven. His zeal never degenerated into passion or rashness, nor his constancy into obstinacy, nor his benevolence into weakness, nor his tenderness into sentimentality. His unworldliness was free from indifference and unsociability, his dignity from pride and presumption, his affability from undue familiarity, his self-denial from moroseness, his temperance from austerity. He combined child-like innocence with manly strength, all-absorbing devotion to God with untiring interest in the welfare of man, tender love to the sinner with uncompromising severity against sin, commanding dignity with winning humility, fearless courage with wise caution, unyielding firmness with sweet gentleness. He is justly compared with the lion in strength and with the lamb in meekness. He equally possessed the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. He brought both the sword against every form of wickedness, and the peace which the world cannot give. He was the most effective, and yet the least noisy, the most radical, and yet the most conservative, calm and patient of all reformers. He came to fulfil every letter of the law, and yet he made all things new. The same hand which drove the profane traffickers from the temple, blessed little children, healed the lepers, and rescued the sinking disciple; the same ear which heard the voice of approbation from heaven, was open to the cries of the woman in travail; the same mouth which pronounced the terrible woe on the hypocrites and condemned the impure desire and unkind feeling as well as the open crime, blessed the poor in spirit, announced pardon to the adulteress, and prayed for his murderers; the same eye which

beheld the mysteries of God and penetrated the heart of man shed tears of compassion over ungrateful Jerusalem, and tears of friendship at the grave of Lazarus. These are indeed opposite, yet not contradictory traits of character, as little as the different manifestations of God's power and goodness in the tempest and the sunshine, in the towering alps and the lily of the valley, in the boundless ocean and dew-drop of the morning. They are separated in imperfect men indeed, but united in Christ, the universal model for all.

Finally as all the active virtues meet in him, so he unites the active or heroic virtues with the passive and gentle. He is equally the highest standard of all true martyrdom.

No character can become complete without trial and suffering, and a noble death is the crowning act of a noble life. Edmund Burke said to Fox in the English Parliament: "Obloquy is a necessary ingredient of all true glory. Calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph." The ancient Greeks and Romans admired a good man struggling with misfortune as a sight worthy of the gods. Plato describes the righteous man as one who without doing any injustice, yet has the appearance of the greatest injustice and proves his own justice by perseverance against all calumny unto death; yea he predicts that if such a righteous man should ever appear, he would be "scourged, tortured, bound, deprived of his sight, and after having suffered all possible injury nailed on a post."* No wonder that the ancient fathers saw in this remarkable passage an unconscious prophecy of Christ. But how far is this ideal of the great philosopher from the actual reality as it appeared three hundred years afterwards. The great men of this world, who rise even above themselves on inspiring occasions and boldly face a superior army, are often thrown off their equilibrium in ordinary life and grow impatient at trifling obstacles. Only think of Napoleon at the head of his conquering legions and at the helm of an empire, and

* Politia p. 74 sqq. ed. Ast. (Plat. Opera vol. IV.) p. 361 E. ed. Bip.

the same Napoleon after the defeat at Waterloo and on the island of St. Helena. The highest form of passive virtue attained by ancient heathenism or modern secular heroism is that stoicism which meets and overcomes the trials and misfortunes of life in the spirit of haughty contempt and unfeeling indifference, which destroys the sensibilities and is but another exhibition of selfishness and pride.

Christ has set up a far higher standard by his teaching and example, never known before or since, except in imperfect imitation of him. He has revolutionized moral philosophy and convinced the world that forgiving love to the enemy, holiness and humility, gentle patience in suffering and cheerful submission to the holy will of God is the crowning excellency of moral greatness. "If thy brother," he says, "trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."* "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."† This is a sublime maxim truly, but still more sublime is its actual exhibition in his life.

Christ's passive virtue is not confined to the closing scenes of his ministry. As human life is beset at every step by trials, vexations, and hindrances, which should serve the educational purpose of developing its resources and proving its strength, so was Christ's. During the whole state of his humiliation he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"‡ and had to endure "the contradiction of sinners."‖ He was poor, and suffered hunger and fatigue. He was tempted by the devil. His path was obstructed with apparently unsurmountable difficulties from the outset. His words and miracles called forth the bitter hatred of the world, which resulted at last in the bloody counsel of death. The Pharisees and Sadducees forgot their jealousies and quarrels in opposing him. They rejected and perverted his testimony; they laid snares to

* Luke 17, 4. † Matth. 5, 44. ‡ Isai. 50, 3. ‖ Heb. 12, 3.

him by insiduous questions ; they called him a glutton and a winebibber for eating and drinking like other men, a friend of publicans and sinners for his condescending love and mercy, a sabbath-breaker for doing good on the sabbath day ; they charged him with madness and blasphemy for asserting his unity with the Father, and derived his miracles from Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The common people, though astonished at his wisdom and mighty works, pointed sneeringly at his origin ; his own country and native town refused him the honor of a prophet. Even his brothers, we are told, did not believe in him, and in their impatient zeal for a temporal kingdom they found fault with his unostentatious proceeding.* His apostles and disciples, with all their profound reverence for his character and faith in his divine origin and mission as the Messiah of God, yet by their ignorance, their carnal Jewish notions and their almost habitual misunderstanding of his spiritual discourses, must have constituted a severe trial of patience to a teacher of far less superiority to his pupils.

But how shall we describe his passion more properly so called with which no other suffering can be compared for a moment! Never did any man suffer more innocently, more unjustly, more intensely, than Jesus of Nazareth. Within the narrow limits of a few hours we have here a tragedy of universal significance, exhibiting every form of human weakness and infernal wickedness, of ingratitude, desertion, injury and insult, of bodily and mental pain and anguish, culminating in the most ignominious death then known among the Jews and Gentiles. The government and the people combined against him who came to save them. His own disciples forsook him ; Peter denied him ; Judas, under the inspiration of the devil betrayed him. The rulers of the nation condemned him, the furious mob

* John 7, 3–5. It is immaterial for our purpose whether we understand by his brothers (not "brethren" as the Common Version has it) younger sons of Joseph and Mary, or older sons of Joseph from a former marriage, or cousins.

cried: "Crucify him!" rude soldiers mocked him. He was seized in the night, hurried from tribunal to tribunal, arrayed in a crown of thorns, insulted, smitten, scourged, spit upon and hung like a criminal and a slave between two robbers and murderers!

How did Christ bear all these little and great trials of life, and the death on the Cross? Let us remember first, that unlike the icy Stoics, in their unnatural and repulsive pseudo-virtue, he had the keenest sensibilities and the deepest sympathies with all human grief, that made him even shed tears at the grave of a friend and in the agony of the garden, and provide a refuge for his mother in the last dying hour. But with this truly human tenderness and delicacy of feeling, he ever combined an unutterable dignity and majesty, a sublime self-control and imperturbable calmness of mind. There is a grandeur in his deepest sufferings, which forbids a feeling of pity and compassion on our side as incompatible with the admiration and reverence for his character. We feel the force of his words to the women of Jerusalem, when they bewailed him on the way to Calvary: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children," &c. We never hear him break out in angry passion and violence, although he was at war with the whole ungodly world. He never murmured, never uttered discontent, displeasure or resentment. He was never disheartened, discouraged, ruffled or fretted, but full of unbounded confidence that all was well ordered in the providence of his heavenly Father. He moved serenely like the sun above the clouds as they sailed under him. He was ever surrounded by the element of peace, and said in his parting hour: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." * He was never what we call unhappy, but full of inward joy which he bequeathed to his disciples in that sublimest of all prayers, "that they might have his joy fulfilled in

* John 14, 27.

themselves." † With all his severe rebuke to the Pharisees, he never indulged in personalities. He ever returned good for evil. He forgave Peter for his denial, and would have forgiven Judas, if in the exercise of sincere repentance he had sought his pardon. Even while hanging on the cross, he had only the language of pity for the wretches who were driving the nails into his hands and feet, and prayed in their behalf: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." He did not seek or hasten his martyrdom, like many of the early martyrs of the Ignatian type in their morbid enthusiasm and ambitious humility, but quietly and patiently waited for the hour appointed by the will of his heavenly Father. But when it came, with what self-possession and calmness, with what strength and meekness, with what majesty and gentleness did he pass through its dark and trying scenes! Here every word and act are unutterably significant, from the agony in Gethsemane, when overwhelmed with the sympathetic sense of the entire guilt of mankind, and in full view of the terrible scenes before him—the only guiltless being in the world—he prayed that the cup might pass from him, but immediately added: "Not my, but thy will be done," to the triumphant exclamation on the cross: "It is finished!" Even his dignified silence before the tribunal of his enemies and the furious mob, when "as a lamb dumb before his shearers he opened not his mouth," is more eloquent than any apology, and made Pilate tremble. Who will venture to bring a parallel from the annals of ancient or modern sages, when even a Rousseau confessed: "If Socrates suffered and died like a philosopher, Christ suffered and died like a God!" The passion and crucifixion of Jesus, like his whole character, stands without a parallel, solitary and alone in its glory, and will ever continue to be what it has been for these eighteen hundred years, the most sacred theme of meditation, the highest exemplar of suffering virtue, the strongest weapon

† John 17, 13, comp. 16, 33.

against sin and Satan, the deepest source of comfort to the noblest and best of men.

Such was Jesus of Nazareth—a true man in body, soul and spirit, yet differing from all men, a character abolutely unique and original from tender childhood to ripe manhood, moving in unbroken union with God, overflowing with the purest love to man, free from every sin and error, innocent and holy, teaching and practising all virtues in perfect harmony, devoted solely and uniformly to the noblest ends, sealing the purest life with the sublimest death, and ever acknowledged since as the one and only perfect model of goodness and holiness! All human greatness loses on closer inspection; but Christ's character grows more and more pure, sacred and lovely, the better we know him. No biographer, moralist, or artist can be satisfied with any attempt of his to set it forth. It is felt to be infinitely greater than any conception or representation of it by the mind, the tongue and the pencil of man or angel. We might as well attempt to empty the waters of the boundless sea into a narrow well, or to portray the splendor of the risen sun and the starry heavens with ink. No picture of the Saviour, though drawn by the masterhand of a Raphael, or Dürer, or Rubens; no epic, though conceived by the genius of a Dante, or Milton, or Klopstock, can improve on the artless narrative of the gospel, whose only but all-powerful charm is truth. In this case certainly truth is stranger and stronger than fiction, and speaks best for itself without comment, explanation and eulogy. Here and here alone the highest perfection of art falls short of the historical fact, and fancy finds no room for idealizing the real. For here we have the absolute ideal itself in living reality. It seems to me that this consideration alone should satisfy the reflecting mind that Christ's character, though truly natural and human, must be at the same time truly supernatural and divine.

The whole range of history and fiction furnishes no parallel to such a character. There never was any thing even

approaching to it before or since, except in faint imitation of his example. It cannot be explained on purely human principles, nor derived from any intellectual and moral forces of the age in which he lived. On the contrary it stands in marked contrast to the whole surrounding world of Judaism and heathenism, which present to us the dreary picture of internal decay, and which actually crumbled into ruin before the new moral creation of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. He is the one absolute and unaccountable exception to the universal experience of mankind. He is the great central miracle of the whole gospel history, and all his miracles are but the natural and necessary manifestations of his miraculous person performed with the same ease with which we perform our ordinary daily works.

There is but one rational explanation of this sublime mystery, and this is found in Christ's own testimony concerning his superhuman and divine origin.* This testimony challenges at once our highest regard and belief from the absolute veracity which no one ever denied him or could deny without destroying at once the very foundation of his universally conceded moral purity and greatness.

Christ strongly asserts his humanity, and calls himself, in innumerable passages, the Son of man.† This expression, while it places him in one view on common ground with us as flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, already indicates at the same time that he is more than an ordinary individual, not merely *a* son of man like all other descendants of Adam, but *the* Son of man, the man in the highest sense, the ideal, the universal, the absolute man, the second Adam descended from heaven, the head of a new and superior order of the race, the King of Israel, the Messiah. The same is the case with the cognate term, "the Son of David," which

* For a very full exposition of this testimony, we refer to the instructive and able work of W. Fr. Gess: *Die Lehre von der Person Christi entwickelt aus dem Selbstbewusstsein Christi und aus dem Zeugnisse der Apostel.* Basel, 1856.

† Comp. the Dictionaries, and especially Schmid's and Bagster's Greek Concordances of the N. T. (the latter republished by the Harpers, N. York, 1855) sub. v. *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.*

is frequently given to Christ, by the two blind men, the Syrophenician woman, and the people at large.* The appellation does not express then, as many suppose, the humiliation and condescension of Christ simply, but his elevation rather above the ordinary level and the actualization in him and through him of the ideal standard of human nature under its moral and religious aspect or in its relation to God. This interpretation is suggested grammatically by the use of the definite article, and historically by the origin of the term in Daniel 7, 13, where it signifies the Messiah as the head of a universal and eternal kingdom. It commends itself moreover at once as the most natural and significant in such passages as: "Ye shall see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man"; † "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven";‡ "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"; § "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day"; ‖ "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you"; ¶ "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father";** "The Son of man is come to save"; †† "The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man".‡‡ Even those passages which are quoted for the opposite view, receive, in our interpretation, a greater force and beauty from the sublime contrast which places the voluntary condescension and humiliation of Christ in the most striking light, as when he says: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"; §§ or, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." ‖‖ Thus the

* Matth. 9, 27. 15, 22. 12, 23. 21, 9. 22, 41ff., etc.

† John 1, 51 (or v. 52 in the Greek text and the German version).

‡ John 3, 13. § Matth. 9, 6. Mark 2, 10. ‖ Matth. 12, 8. Mark 2, 28. ¶ John 6, 53.

** Matth 16, 17, comp. 19, 28. 24, 30. 25, 31. 26, 64. Luke 21, 27. 36.

†† Matth. 18, 11, comp. Luke 19, 10. ‡‡ John 5, 27. §§ Luke 9, 58.

‖‖ Matth. 20, 27. 28.

manhood of Christ, rising far above all ordinary manhood, though freely coming down to its lowest ranks with the view to their elevation and redemption, is already the portal of his godhood.

But he calls himself at the same time, as he is most frequently called by his disciples, "the Son of God" in an equally emphatic sense. He is not merely *a* Son of God among others, angels, archangels, princes and judges, and redeemed men, but *the* Son of God as no other being ever was, is, or can be, all others being sons or children of God only by derivation or adoption after a new spiritual birth, and in dependance on his absolute and eternal Sonship.* He is, as his favorite disciple calls him, the "Only begotten Son," or, as the old Catholic theology expresses it, eternally begotten of the substance of the Father. In this high sense the title is freely given to him by his disciples,† without a remonstrance on his part, and by God the Father himself at his baptism and at the transfiguration.‡ Christ represents himself moreover as being not of this world, but sent from God, as having come from God, and as being in heaven while living on earth. § He not only announces and proclaims the truth as other messengers of God, but declares himself to be the Light of the World; || the Way, the Truth, and the Life; ¶ the Resurrection and the Life.** "All things," he says, "are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." †† He invites the weary

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* Matth. 11, 27. 21, 37. 22, 42. 26, 63 f. 27, 43. Mark 12, 6. 13, 32. 14, 62. Luke 10, 22. John 5, 19—26. 9, 35—38. 10, 36. 11, 4. 14, 13. 17, 1. 19, 7.

† Matth. 16, 16. Mark 3, 11. John 1, 18. 34. 49. 11, 27. 20, 31,—besides the many passages in the Acts and Epistles, where the term *υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* is as frequent as the term *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* in the Gospels.

‡ Matth. 3, 17. Luke 3, 22. Matth. 17, 5. Luke 9, 35.

§ John 3, 13. || John 8, 12. ¶ John 14, 6. ** John 11, 25.

†† Matth. 11, 27. This passage is a striking parallel to the sublimest sayings in the fourth gospel, and proves the essential identity of the Synoptic and the Johannean picture of Christ.

and heavy laden to come to him for rest and peace.* He promises life in the highest and deepest sense, even eternal life to every one who believes in him.† He claims and admits to be the Christ or the Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets of old testify, and the King of Israel.‡ He is the Lawgiver of the new and last dispensation, § the Founder of a spiritual kingdom coextensive with the race, and everlasting as eternity itself, ‖ the appointed Judge of the quick and the dead,¶ the only Mediator between God and man, the Saviour of the world.** He parts from his disciples with those sublime words which alone certify his divinity: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." ††

Finally he claims such a relation to the Father, which implies both the equality of substance and the distinction of person, and which in connection with his declarations concerning the Holy Spirit leads with logical necessity, as it were, to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. For this doctrine saves the Divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit without affecting the fundamental truth of the Unity of the Godhead, and keeps the proper medium between an abstract and lifeless monotheism and a polytheistic tritheism.

He always distinguishes himself from God the Father, who sent him, whose work he came to fulfil, whose will he

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* Matth. 11, 28. † John 3, 36. 5, 24. 6, 40. 47. 50—58. 11, 25.

‡ John 4, 26. 5, 39. 46. Matth. 14, 33. 16, 16 f. 26, 63 f., etc.

§ Matth. 5, 22—44. 28, 19. 20.

‖ Matth. 16, 19. 27, 11. Luke 22, 30. John 18, 36. Comp. Dan. 7, 13. Luke 1, 33.

¶ John 5, 22. 25—27. Matth. 25, 31 ff., etc.

** Matth. 18, 11. Luke 9, 56. 19, 10. John 3, 17. 5, 34. 10, 9. 12, 47.—Comp. Luke 1, 47. 2, 11. John 4, 42, etc.

†† Matth. 28, 18—20.

obeys, by whose power he performs his miracles, to whom he prays, and with whom he communes as a self-conscious personal being. And so he distinguishes himself with equal clearness from the Holy Spirit, whom he received at his baptism, whom he breathed into his disciples and whom he promised to send and did send on them as the other paraclet, as the Spirit of truth and holiness with the whole fulness of the accomplished salvation. But he never makes a similar distinction between himself and the Son of God; on the contrary he identifies himself with the Son of God, and uses this term, as already remarked, in a sense which implies much more than the Jewish conception of the Messiah and nothing short of the equality of essence or substance. For he claims as the Son a real self-conscious preexistence before man and even before the world, consequently also before time—for time was created with the world. "Before Abraham was," he says, "I am"—* significantly using the past in the one, and the present in the other case to mark the difference between man's temporal and his own eternal mode of existence—, and in the sacerdotal prayer he asks to be clothed again with the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world.† He assumes divine names and attributes as far as consistent with his state of humiliation, he demands and receives divine honors.‡ He freely and repeatedly exercises the prerogative of pardoning sin in his own name, which the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees with a logic whose force is irresistible on their premises, looked upon as blasphemous presumption.‖ He familiarly classes himself with the infinite majesty of Jehovah in one common plural, and boldly declares: "He that hath seen me hath seen the

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* John 8, 58.

† John 17, 5. Comp. the testimony of the apostles on the preexistence, John 1, 1–14. Col. 1, 16. Heb. 1, 2. 3.

‡ John 5, 23.

‖ Matth. 9, 6. Luke 5, 20–24. 7, 47. 48. § John 14, 9.

Father;"§ "I and the Father are one."* He coordinates himself, in the baptismal formula, with the Divine Father, and the Divine Spirit,* and allows himself to be called by Thomas in the name of all the apostles: "My Lord and my God!"†

These are the most astounding and transcendant pretensions ever set up by any being. He, the humblest and lowliest of man, makes them repeatedly and uniformly to the last in the face of the whole world, even in the darkest hour of suffering. He makes them not in swelling, pompous, ostentatious language, which almost necessarily springs from false pretensions, but in a natural, spontaneous style, with perfect ease, freedom and composure, as a native prince would speak of the attributes and scenes of royalty at his father's court. He never falters or doubts, never apologizes for them, never enters into an explanation. He sets them forth as self-evident truths which need only be stated to challenge the belief and submission of mankind.

Now suppose for a moment a purely human teacher, however great and good, suppose a Moses or Elijah, a John the Baptist, an apostle Paul or John—not to speak of any father, schoolman, or reformer—to say: "I am the Light of the world," "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," "I and the Father are one," and call upon all men: "Come unto me," "Follow me," that you may find "life" and "peace" which you cannot find elsewhere: would it not create a universal feeling of pity or indignation? No human being on earth could set up the least of these pretensions without being set down at once as a madman or a blasphemer.

But from the mouth of Christ these colossal pretensions excite neither pity nor indignation, nor even the least feeling of

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* John 10, 30. The passage teaches certainly more than the ethical unity of will, it asserts according to the context the unity of power which is based on the unity of essence or the homousia. The ἕν excludes Arianism, the plural ἐσμέν Sabellianism and Patripassianism.

† Matth. 28, 19.

‡ John 20, 28.

incongruity or impropriety. We read and hear them over and over again without surprise.* They seem perfectly natural and well sustained by a most extraordinary life and the most extraordinary works. There is no room here for the least suspicion of vanity, pride, or self-deception. For these eighteen hundred years these claims have been acknowledged by millions of people of all nations and tongues, of all classes and conditions, of the most learned and mighty as well as the most ignorant and humble with an instinctive sense of the perfect agreement of what Christ claimed to be with what he really was. Is not this fact most remarkable? Is it not a triumphant vindication of Christ's character and an irresistible proof of the truth of his pretensions?

There is no other solution of the mighty problem within the reach of human learning and ingenuity. Let us briefly review in conclusion the various attempts of Unitarians and unbelievers to account for the character of Christ without admitting his divinity.

The semi-infidelity of Socinians and Unitarians is singularly inconsistent. Admitting the faultless perfection of Christ's character and the truthfulness of the Gospel-history, and yet denying his divinity, they must either charge him with such egregious exaggerations and conceit as would overthrow at once the concession of his moral perfection, or they must so weaken and pervert his testimony concerning his relation to God as to violate all the laws of grammar and sound interpretation. Dr. W. E. Channing, the ablest and noblest reprepresentative of American Unitarianism, prefers to avoid the difficulty which he was unable to solve. In his admirable discourse on the Character of Christ he goes as far almost as any orthodox divine in vindicating to him the highest possible purity and excellency as a man,

* "Of all the readers of the Gospel," says Bushnell, p. 290, "it probably never even occurs to one in a hundred thousand, to blame his conceit, or the egregious vanity of his pretensions." Even the better class of Unitarians instinctively bow before these claims. See the remarkable passage of Dr. Channing quoted below.

but he stops half way and passes by in silence those extraordinary claims, which are inexplicable on merely human principles. He approaches, however, the very threshold of the true faith in the following remarkable passage which we have a right to quote against his own system. "I confess," he says, "when I can escape the deadening power of habit, and can receive the full import of such passages as the following,—'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' —'I am come to seek and to save that which was lost,'— 'He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven,'—'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me before men, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of the Father with the holy angels,'—'In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you:'—I say, when I can succeed in realizing the import of such passages, I feel myself listening to a being, such as never before and never since spoke in human language. I am awed by the consciousness of greatness which these simple words express; and when I connect this greatness with the proofs of Christ's miracles which I gave you in a former discourse, I am compelled to exclaim with the centurion, 'Truly, this was the Son of God.'" But this is not all. We have seen that Christ goes much further than in the passages here quoted, that he forgives sins in his own name, that he asserts pre-existence before Abraham and before the world —not only ideally in the mind of God, for this would not distinguish him from Abraham or any other creature, but in the real sense of self-conscious personal existence—, that he claims and receives divine honors and attributes, and calls himself equal with the great Jehovah. How can a being so pure and holy, and withal so humble and lowly, so perfectly free from every trace of enthusiasm and conceit, as Dr. Channing freely and emphatically asserts Christ to have been, lay claim to any thing which he was not in fact.* Why then not also go beyond the exclamation of the heathen centurion, and unite with the con-

* Discourse on the *Character of Christ*, in Channing's Works, vol. IV. p. 20.

fession of Peter and the adoration of the skeptical St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" Unitarianism admits altogether too much for its own conclusions and is therefore driven to the logical alternative of falling back upon an infidel, or of advancing to the orthodox christology. Such a man as Channing, who was certainly under the influence of the holy example of Christ, would not hesitate for the choice, as we may infer from his general spirit and from his last address delivered at Lenox, Massachusetts in 1842, shortly before his death, where he said: "The doctrine of the Word made flesh shows us God uniting himself intimately with our nature, manifesting himself in a human form, for the very end of making us partakers of his own perfection."

The infidelity of the enemies of Christianity is logically more consistent, though absolutely untenable in the premises. It resorts either to imposture, or enthusiasm, or poetical fiction.

The hypothesis of *imposture* is so revolting to moral as well as common sense that its mere statement is its condemnation. It has never been seriously carried out, and no scholar of any decency and self-respect would now dare to profess it.† How, in the name of logic and experience, could an imposter, that is a deceitful, selfish, depraved man, have invented and consistently maintained from beginning to end the purest and noblest character known in history,

† It was first suggested by the heathen assailants of Christianity, Celsus and Julian the Apostate, then insinuated by French deists of the Voltairean school, but never raised to the dignity of scientific argument. The only attempt to carry it out, and that a mere fragmentary one, was made by the anonymous "*Wolfenbuettel Fragmentist*," since known as Hermann Samuel Reimarus, professor of oriental literature in the College at Hamburg, who died in 1786. His *Fragments* were never intended for publication, but only for a few friends. Lessing found them in the library at Wolfenbüttel and commenced to publish them, without the author's knowledge, in 1774, not, as he said, because he agreed with them, but because he wished to arouse the spirit of investigation. This mode of procedure Semler, the father of German neology, wittingly compared to the act of setting a city on fire for the purpose of trying the engines.

with the most perfect air of truth and reality? How could he have conceived and succefsfully carried through, in the face of the strongest prejudices of his people and age, a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude and sublimity, and sacrified his own life for it? The difficulty is not lessened by shifting the charge of fraud from Christ upon the apostles and evangelists, who were any thing but designing hypocrites and deceivers, and leave upon every unsophisticated reader the impression of an artless simplicity and honesty rarely equalled and never surpassed by any writers learned or unlearned, of ancient or modern times. What imaginable motive could have induced them to engage in such a wicked scheme, when they knew that the whole world would persecute them even to death? How could they have formed and successfully sustained a conspiracy for such a purpose without ever falling out or betraying themselves by some inconsistent word or act? And who can believe that the Christian Church for these eighteen hundred years, now embracing nearly the whole civilized world, should have been duped and fooled by a Galilean carpenter or a dozen illiterate fishermen? Verily this lowest form of infidelity is the grossest insult to reason and sense and to the dignity of human nature.

The hypothesis of *enthusiasm* or self-deception, though less disreputable, is equally unreasonable in view of the uniform clearness, calmness, self-possession, humility, dignity and patience of Christ,—qualities the very opposite to those which characterize an enthusiast. We might imagine a Jew of that age to have fancied himself the Messiah and the Son of God, but instead of opposing all the popular notions, and discouraging all the temporal hopes of his countrymen, he would, like Barcochba of a later period, have headed a rebellion against the hated tyranny of the Romans and endeavored to establish a temporal kingdom. Enthusiasm, which in this case must have bordered on madness itself, instead of calmly and patiently bearing the malignant opposition of the leaders of the nation, would have broken out in violent passion and precipitate action.

"The charge," says Dr. Channing, "of an extravagant, self-deluding enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus. Where can we find the traces of it in his history? Do we detect them in the calm authority of his precepts; in the mild, practical, and beneficent spirit of his religion; in the unlabored simplicity of the language with which he unfolds his high powers, and the sublime truths of religion; or in the good sense, the knowledge of human nature, which he always discovers in his estimate and treatment of the different classes of men with whom he acted? Do we discover this enthusiasm in the singular fact, that whilst he claimed power in the future world, and always turned men's minds to Heaven, he never indulged his own imagination, or stimulated that of his disciples, by giving vivid pictures, or any minute description, of that unseen state? The truth is, that, remarkable as was the character of Jesus, it was distinguished by something more than by calmness and self-possession. This trait pervades his other excellences. How calm was his piety! Point me, if you can, to one vehement, passionate expression of his religious feelings. Does the Lord's Prayer breath a feverish enthusiasm? . . . His benevolence, too, though singularly earnest and deep, was composed and serene. He never lost the possession of himself in his sympathy with others; was never hurried into the impatient and rash enterprises of an enthusiastic philanthrophy; but did good with the tranquility and constancy which mark the providence of God."*

But the champions of this theory may admit all this, and yet fasten the delusion upon the disciples of Christ who were so dazzled by his character, words and works that they mistook an extraordinary man for a divine being, and extraordinary cures for supernatural miracles. This is the view of the older German rationalism (the so called *rationalismus communis, or vulgaris*†), and forms a parallel

* Discourse on the Character of Christ. Works, vol. IV. 17 and 18.

† Or the rationalism of common sense, as distinct from the rationalism of

to the heathen rationalism of Euhemerus, of the Cyrenaic school, who explained the gods of the Greek mythology as human sages, heroes, kings and tyrants, whose superior knowledge or great deeds secured them divine honors or the hero-worship of posterity.‡ It was fully developed, with a considerable degree of patient learning and acumen, by the late professor H. E. G. Paulus of Heidelberg.‖ He takes the gospel history as actual history, but by a critical separation of what he calls *fact* from what he calls *judgement* of the actor or narrator, he explains it exclusively from natural causes and thus brings it down to the level of every day events. This "natural" interpretation, however, turns out to be most unnatural and commits innumerable sins against the laws of hermeneutics and against common sense itself. To prove this it is only necessary to give some specimens from the exegesis of Paulus and his school. The glory of the Lord which, in the night of his birth, shone around the shepherds of Jerusalem, was simply an *ignis fatuus*, or a meteor; the miracle at Christ's baptism may be easily reduced to thunder and lightening and a sudden disappearance of the clouds; the tempter in the wilderness was a cunning Pharisee, and was only mistaken by the evangelists for the devil who does not exist except in the imagination of the superstitious; the supposed miraculous cures of the Saviour turn out on closer examination to be simply deeds either of philanthrophy, or medical skill, or good luck: the changing of

uncommon sense or speculative reason. The sense of both systems, however, ends is non-sense. Dr. Marheincke defined a Rationalist or, as Paulus called him, a *Denkglaeubige*, as a man, *der zu denken glaubt und zu glauben denkt; es ist aber mit beidem gleich null.* The Hegelian school has successfully rediculed common rationalism and made every scholar of philosophical pretensions ashamed of it. But the infidel wing of that school has at last relapsed into the same or still greater absurdities.

‡ Comp. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibli. Fragm.* l. vii; Cicero, *De natura deor.* l. 42; Sextus Empir., *Adv. math.* ix. 17.

‖ Born in the kingdom of Würtemberg 1761, then successively professor in different universities, at last in Heidelberg, where he died in 1847, after having long outlived himself. His rationalistic exegesis is laid down in his *Commentary on the Gospels*, published since 1800, and his *Life of Jesus*, 1828.

water into wine was an innocent and benevolent wedding joke, and the delusion of the company must be charged on the twilight, not upon Christ; the daughter of Jairus, the youth of Nain, Lazarus, and Jesus himself, were raised not from real death, but simply from a trance or swoon; and the ascension of the Lord is nothing more than his sudden disappearance behind a cloud that accidentally intervened between him and his disciples! And yet these very evangelists, who must have been destitute of the most ordinary talent of observation and even of common sense, have contrived to paint a character and to write a story which in sublimity, grandeur and interest throws the productions of the proudest historians into the shade, and has exerted an irresistible charm upon Christendom for these eighteen hundred years! No wonder that those absurdities of a misguided learning and ingenuity hardly survived their author. It is a decided merit of Strauss that he has thoroughly refuted the work of his predecessor, and given it the death blow. But his own theory has shared no better fate.

The last hypothesis of a *poetical fiction* was matured and carried out with a high degree of ability and ingenuity by the speculative or pantheistic rationalism of David Frederick Strauss, the author of the famous *Life of Jesus.** This writer sinks the Gospel-history, as to the mode of its orgin and realness, substantially on a par with the ancient mythologies of Greece and Rome. Without denying altogether the historical existence of Jesus, and even admitting him to have been a religious genius of the first magnitude, he yet, from pantheistic premises and by a cold process of hypercritical dissection of the apparently contradictory accounts of the witnesses, resolves all the supernatural and miraculous elements of his person and history into myths, or imaginative representations of religious ideas in the form of facts which

* The *Leben Jesu* by Strauss, Dr. phil., who was born in 1806 and is still living, was first published 1835 at Tübingen in 2 volumes, and for the fourth, in all probability also for the last time in 1840. It was also translated into English by a Miss Evans.

were honestly believed by the authors to have actually occurred. The ideas symbolized in these facts are declared to be true in the abstract or as applied to humanity as a whole, but denied as false in the concrete or in their application to an individual. The authorship of the evangelical myths is ascribed to the primitive Christian society pregnant with Jewish Messianic hopes and kindled to hero-worship by the appearance of the extraordinary person of Jesus of Nazareth whom they took to be the promised Messiah. But this theory is likewise surrounded by unsurmountable difficulties. Who ever heard of a poem unconsciously produced by a mixed multitude and honestly mistaken by them all for actual history? How could the five hundred persons, to whom the risen Saviour is said to have appeared, dream the same dream at the same time, and then believe it as a veritable fact at the risk of their lives? How could a man like St. Paul submit his strong and clear mind and devote all the energies of his noble life to a poetical fiction of the very sect whom he once persecuted unto death? How could such an illusion stand the combined hostility of the Jewish and heathen world, and the searching criticism of an age of high civilization, and even of incredulity and skepticism? How strange that unlettered and unskilled fishermen, and not the philosphers and poets of classic Greece and Rome, should have composed such a grand poem and painted a character to whom Strauss himself is forced to assign the very first rank among all the religious geniuses and founders of religion!

The poets must in this case have been superior to the hero, and yet the hero is admitted to be the purest and greatest man that ever lived! Where are the traces of a fervid imagination and poetic art in the Gospel history? Is it not, on the contrary, remarkably free from all rhetorical and poetical ornament, from every admixture of subjective notions and feelings, even from the expresion of sympathy, admiration and praise? The writers evidently felt that the story speaks best for itself and could not be improved by the art and skill of man. Their discrepancies,

which at best do not affect the picture of Christ's character in the least but only the subordinate details of his history, prove the absence of conspiracy, attest the honesty of their intention and confirm the general credibility of their account. Verily, the Gospel history, related with such unmistakable honesty and simplicity by immediate witnesses and their pupils, proclaimed in open day light from Jerusalem to Rome, believed by thousands of Jews, Greeks and Romans, sealed with the blood of apostles, evangelists and saints of every grade of society and culture, is better attested by external and internal evidence than any other history. The same negative criticism, which Strauss applied to the Gospels, would with equal plausibility destroy the strongest chain of evidence before a court of justice, and resolve the life of Socrates, or Charlemagne, or Luther, or, Napoleon into a mythical dream. The secret of the mythical hypothesis is the pantheistic denial of a personal living God and the a priori assumption of the impossibility of a miracle. In its details it is so complicated and artificial that it can not be made generally intelligible, and in proportion as it is popularized, it reverts to the vulgar hypothesis of intentional fraud from which it professed at the start to shrink back in horror and contempt.

With this last and ablest effort, infidelity seems to have exhausted its scientific resources. It could only repeat itself hereafter. Its different theories have all been tried and found wanting. One has in turn transplanted and refuted the other, even during the lifetime of their champions. They explain nothing in the end; on the contrary, they only substitute an unnatural for a supernatural miracle, an inextricable enigma for a revealed mystery. They equally tend to undermine all faith in God's Providence, in history, and ultimately in every principle of truth and virtue, and they deprive a poor and fallen humanity, in a world of sin, temptation and sorrow, of its only hope and comfort in life and in death.

Dr. Strauss, by far the clearest and strongest of all assailants of the Gospel-history, seems to have had a passing

feeling of the disastrous tendency of his work of destruction and the awful responsibility he assumed. "The results of our inquiry," he says in the closing chapter of his *Life of Jesus*, "have apparently annihilated the greatest and most important part of that which the Christian has been wont to believe concerning his Jesus, have uprooted all the encouragements which he has derived from his faith, and deprived him of all his consolations. The boundless store of truth and life which for eighteen hundred years have been the aliment of humanity, seems irretrievably devastated, the most sublime levelled with the dust, God divested of his grace, man of his dignity, and the tie between heaven and earth broken. Piety turns away with horror from so fearful an act of desecration, and strong in the impregnable self-evidence of its faith, boldly pronounces that—let an audacious criticism attempt what it will—all which the Scriptures declare and the Church believes of Christ, will still subsist as eternal truth, nor needs one iota of it to be renounced." * Strauss makes then an attempt, it is true, at a philosophical reconstruction of what he vainly imagines to have annihilated as a historical fact by his sophistical criticism. He professes to admit the abstract truth of the orthodox christology, or the union of the divine and human, but perverts it into a purely intellectual and pantheistic meaning. He refuses divine attributes and honors to the glorious head of the race, but applies them to a decapitated humanity. He thus substitutes, from pantheistic prejudice, a metaphysical abstraction for a living reality, a mere notion for a historical fact, a progress in philosophy and mechanical arts for the moral victory over sin and death, a pantheistic hero-worship, or self-adoration of a fallen race, for the worship of the only true and living God, the gift of a stone for the bread of eternal life! †

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* *Leben Jesu*, Schlussabhandlung, vol. ii., p. 663 (4th ed. of 1840).

† "In an individual," says Strauss, *Leben Jesu*, vol. ii. p. 710, "in one Godman the properties and functions which the church doctrine ascribes to Christ, contradict themselves; in the idea of the race they agree. *Humanity*

Humanity scorns such a miserable substitute, which has yet to give the first proof of any power for good, and which will probably never convert or improve a single individual. It must have a living head, a real Lord and Saviour from sin and death. With renewed faith and confidence it returns from the dreary desolations of a heartless infidelity and the vain conceits of a philosophy falsely so called, to the historical Christ, and exclaims with Peter: "Lord, where shall we go but to Thee, Thou alone hast words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Son of God!"

Yes! There He lives, the Divine man and incarnate God, on the ever fresh and self-authenticating record of the Gospels, in the unbroken history of eighteen centuries, and in the hearts and lives of the wisest and best of our race. Jesus Christ is the most certain, the most sacred, and the most glorious of all facts, arrayed in a beauty and majesty which throws the "starry heavens above us and the moral law within us" into obscurity, and fills us

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is the union of the two natures—the incarnate God, the infinite externalizing itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude; it is the child of the visible mother and the invisible father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature, both within and around man, until it lies before him as an inert matter of his activity; it is the sinless existence, for the course of its development is a blameless one; pollution cleaves to the individual only, and does not touch the race or its history. "It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven; for from the negation of its natural life there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life; from the suppression of its limitation as a personal, national, and terrestial spirit, arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens. By faith in this Christ, especially in his death and resurrection, man is justified before God: that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity, especially by the negation of its natural and sensual aspects, the individual man partakes of the divinely human life of the species."—But the idea of the human and divine is no more contradictory in an individual than in the race. What is true in idea or principle, must also actualize itself or be capable of actualization in a concrete living fact. History teaches moreover that every age, every great movement, and every nation have their representative heads, who comprehend and act out the life of the respective whole. This analogy points us to a general representative head of the entire race, Adam in the natural, and Christ in the spiritual order. The divine humanity of Strauss is like a stream without a fountain, or like a body without a head.

truly with ever growing reverence and awe. He shines forth with the self-evidencing light of the noon-day sun. He is too great, too pure, too perfect to have been invented by any sinful and erring man. His character and claims are confirmed by the sublimsst doctrine, the purest ethics, the mightiest miracles, the grandest spiritual kingdom, and are daily and hourly exhibited in the virtues and graces of all who yield to the regenerating and sanctifying power of his spirit and example. The historical Christ meets and satisfies our deepest intellectual and moral wants. Our souls, if left to their noblest impulses and aspirations, instinctively turn to him as the needle to the magnet, as the flower to the sun, as the panting hart to the fresh fountain. We are made for him, and "our heart is without rest until it rests in him." He commands our assent, he wins our admiration, he overwhelms us to humble adoration and worship. We cannot look upon him without spiritual benefit. We cannot think of him without being elevated above all that is low and mean, and encouraged to all that is good and noble. The very hem of his garment is healing to the touch; one hour spent in his communion outweighs all the pleasures of sin. He is the most precious and indispensable gift of a merciful God to a fallen world. In him are the treasures of true wisdom, in him the fountain of pardon and peace, in him the only substantial hope and comfort in this world and that which is to come. Without him history is a dreary waste, an inextricable enigma; with him it is the unfolding of a plan of infinite wisdom and love. He is the glory of the past, the life of the present, the hope of the future. Mankind could better afford to lose the whole literature of Greece and Rome, of Germany and France, of England and America, than the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Not for all the wealth and wisdom of this world would I weaken the faith of the humblest Christian in his Divine Lord and Saviour; but if, by the grace of God, I could convert a single skeptic to a childlike faith in him, who lived and died for me and for all, I would feel that I had not lived in vain.

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